

# The Howard Collector

SPRING 1971

14



# *The Howard Collector*

Spring 1971  
Volume 3, Number 2  
Whole Number 14

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

"Sailor Dorgan and the Jade Monkey" was announced in the final, January 1934, issue of Magic Carpet (along with Howard's historical adventure, "Gates of Empire," which finally appeared in Golden Fleece). Like all the Sailor Dorgan stories, this began life as a Sailor Steve Costigan story ("Sailor Costigan and the Jade Monkey"). Editor Farnsworth Wright accepted several of these stories for Magic Carpet: "Alleys of Darkness" (published), "Sailor Dorgan and the Turkish Menace," "Sailor Dorgan and the Yellow Cobra," and the present story. The manuscript of "Jade Monkey" was returned to Howard's agent, Otis A. Kline in October of 1935. Howard, recognizing that first person narratives were difficult to market, rewrote the story as a third person narrative (incidentally, changing it back to a Sailor Costigan story). I have used the original version, inasmuch as all other Costigan and Dorgan stories are first person narratives.

"A Dream" was an untitled dream write-up that Howard included with a letter to H.P. Lovecraft. This was found among some papers left by the late R. H. Barlow.

THE DARK MAN AND OTHERS, now out of print in hardback, is to be paperbacked by Lancer Books later this year. . . . Donald M. Grant (West Kingston, R.I. 02892) is reprinting RED SHADOWS, the collected Solomon Kane stories and poems. Also due from Grant shortly is RED BLADES OF BLACK CATHAY, the Howard - Tevis Clyde Smith collaborations.

Walter Shedlofsky, whose acrostics have occasionally appeared in this magazine, has published a slender collection of his acrostics: THE FANTASTIC ACROS. Available from Acrostic Press, P.O. Box 553, St. Louis, Missouri 63188, at \$2.00 - and recommended.

## SAILOR DORGAN AND THE JADE MONKEY

BY PATRICK ERVIN

I hadn't been in Hong Kong more'n a hour when somebody hit me over the head with a bottle. I wasn't much surprized - the Asiatic ports is full of people which has grudges against Dennis Dorgan, A.B., on account the careless habits I have with my fists - but I was irritated.

I was going down a dark alley, minding my own business, when somebody said "Hsst!" and when I turned and said "Huh?" - bang! come the bottle. I was so irritated that I sot on my unseen assailant and we grappled and rolled around in the dark awhile, and it was music to my ears the way he grunted and gasped when I sunk my big fists into his lubberly carcass. At last, close-clinched, we staggered out of the alley under a dim street lamp, where I broke away and crashed him with a right hook which the only reason it didn't knock his brains out was because I pulled it at the last second. And the reason I pulled it was because I rekernized, not a enemy, but a shipmate - Jim Rogers, to be exack.

I bent over him to see if they was any signs of life in him - because catching one of my right hooks on the jaw, even if it is pulled at the last second, is no light matter - and after awhile his eyelids fluttered open, and he looked up and said, "That last sea must have carried away all the rigging!"

"You ain't aboard ship, dope," I answered irritably. "Set up and tell me why you assaults a friend and shipmate, when they is a whole port-full of heathing Chineseses you couldst break bottles on just as well."

"I wanted money, Dennis," he said shamefacedly.

"Well, what's that got to do with it?"

"You got fifty dollars," he accused. "You wouldn't lend it to me to buy a jade monkey, would you?"

"Lissen, Jim," I said, "it ain't nothin' to worry about.

Once I hit a Dutch rassler just like I hit you, and for weeks he thought he was the Czar of Rooshia. But he got all right, and you will too. It ain't likely your brain is addled permanent."

"No, no," he said, "you ain't got the idee. I met a girl which has a jade monkey which is worth thousands of dollars. She'll take fifty for it. I knowed you had fifty bucks, and I - well, I was kinda ashamed to borrow it, when it was all you had, so I was just goin' to kinda tap you on the head and borrow it without you knowin' - I was goin' to pay it back, honest I was, Dennis."

I glared at him more in sorrow than in anger.

"To think," I mourned, "to think that my repertation is so faint and weak that a shipmate imagines he could flatten me with a mere bottle, like I was a ordinary longshoreman. Besides, I ain't got no fifty dollars. Right after I left you on the dock, I lost it in a fan-tan game."

He lapsed into mournful silence, and said, "Woe is me! Whenever I gets a chanct to make some big dough, Fate sneaks up behind me and hands me a kick aft with a number twelve cowhide boot. And she was such a purty gal!"

"Who?" I demanded, coming to life suddenly.

"Miss Betty Chisom, the gal which has the jade monkey," mourned he. "Dennis, it irks me to the bone to see beauty in distress. She's forced to sell her jade monkey to get passage to Australia or Shanghai or somewheres, I forgot. But anyway, she can get there on fifty bucks."

"Where-at is she?" I demanded.

"What do you care?" he retorted bitterly. "You ain't got no fifty bucks."

"I got a conscience," I roared, frowning. "I can't see no white girl langrish in a furrin land among heathing Chineses."

"Well," he said, "I left her in the back room of the American Bar, whilst I went to raise the dough. I guess she's still there waitin' for me."

"Well," I said, "I'm goin' to see her. I don't want her jade monkey, but maybe I can help her."

"You craves that jade monkey," he accused.

"I craves nothin' except a proper amount of respect from a yegg which has just tried to rob me!" I growled.

"If I should profit by this here business, in a money way, I'll see that you gets half the dough. Now take your ungainly carcass elsewhere whilst I strolls down to the American Bar and aids this monkey-ownin' beauty in distress."

So I went down to the American Bar, and in the back room I found a girl waiting patiently. She was a nice looking girl, refined and all, and not the type I expected to find. I was took aback and pulled off my cap and stood there embarrassed-like, whilst she looked at me curiously.

"Your friend Jim Rogers couldn't come back, Miss Chisom," I finally stuttered. "I come instead."

"Oh, that's too bad!" she said. "I mean about Mr. Rogers. He - was going to try to raise some money to buy something of mine -"

"Yeah, he was goin' to raise it offa me," I said. "But I didn't have none which no more I ain't got none now. But he said as how you was in trouble, and maybe - well, I thought - that is -"

I floundered around like a fool, and perspired, and wisht I was fighting a gang of squareheads in a forecastle or something that was easy.

"You mean you want to help me?" she asked.

"Yeah, that's it," I agreed. "I ain't got no money, but -"

"Please sit down," she said. And when I had, she rested her elbows on the table, and her chin on her hands, and said, "I appreciate your kindness, but I wouldn't accept charity from anyone. We Chisoms are proud, in our way. But I have something which I will sell, and which is worth a thousand times what I asked Mr. Rogers. It's no use boring you with how I came to be stranded here. But if I had fifty dollars I could get away, and get back to somebody who - who cares for me. Look!" She set something on the table in front of me. It was a green glassy looking monkey about four inches high.

"Do you know what it is?" she asked, then in a kind of hushed, awed voice, she said, "That is the Yih Hee Yih monkey!"

"You don't say?" I said vaguely. "How did he get that

way?"

"It is the secret of the Mandarin Tang Wu," she said. "For thousands of years it embodied the power of imperial China. It was the symbol of the Manchus; and before them, the fetish of Genghis Khan, the only god he worshipped. Its intrinsic value alone represents thousands of dollars; as a museum piece it is priceless; as a symbol of China, it is priceless. Of course you've heard of the Mandarin Tang Wu, the warlord of Canton?"

I hadn't, but I didn't say nothing, not wanting to appear ignorant.

"Well," she said, "he had it in his keeping. As long as it was carried at the head of his troops, lashed to his royal standard, his armies swept all before them - it was the psychology, you know; they believed with the idol of the great conqueror Genghis Khan, they were invincible. Then it was stolen. The standard-bearer fell, and before the standard could be rescued, a Manchurian bandit slashed it off and ran with it."

"The bandit was captured and executed by the Japanese, and they took the monkey off him. An Indian babu passing as an English secret service agent stole it, and sold it to my brother as a curio; neither of them knew its real value. My brother sent it to me, and as soon as I saw it, I knew it was the jade monkey of Yih Hee Yih! I was going to take it to Tang Wu myself, and sell it back to him, but with this war and all, I haven't dared. And now I've got to get back to Australia as quick as I can. So I was going to sell the jade monkey."

"But, gee whiz," I protested, "it ain't right for you to get no ornery fifty dollars out of it, when the egg that bought it might get thousands -"

"Well," she said, "if I don't get the fifty, I'll never need thousands. Please, can't you help me?"

"If I warn't sailin' with the lowest-lifed lubbers that ever roamed the seas," I said bitterly. "Does they save their dough so's they can sucker beauty in distress? Not them! They squanders it on fan-tan and craps, the dirty bunk-lice! And now, when we has a chance to get half a million from old Bang Jew they fails us. If I only had a match with some mug - hey, wait! I got a idee!"

Turning to her, I said, "Wait right here! Don't go no place else for a hour and a half! By that time I'll be back - I hope with the dough."

And turning, I fled out down the street. I was headed for the Quiet Hour Arena, a waterfront fight club in the toughest part of the port, run by one Spagoni. I arriv at the ticket-window breathless. Inside was noises like glad-iators being ate by lions. The ticket-agent was a red-head-ed Englishman with shoulders like capstans.

"Is the main event over?" I asked.

"It's on now," he snarled.

"I ain't got no money," I begun.

"Well, what you want me to do about it?" he sneered brutally.

"I want you to let me in there, you pig-faced, knock-kneed baboon of a tinhorn limey rangertang," I answered, controlling my righteous indignation.

"On your way, you wind-jammin' gorilla," he sneered, and, maddened beyond endurance, I let fly with a right through the ticket-window and tagged him square on the button, and he went to sleep with a sickly smile on his unshaven lips, as the poet says.

Finding that he had had the door fastened on the inside, so he could watch the fight, I was forced to bust it in. The noise brung the ticket taker, and he was insulting enough to pull a knife on me. Beginning to feel that I wasn't welcome around there, I dissembled my resentment and, handing him a bust on the jaw that left him standing on his neck in a nearby corner, I strode down the aisle and halted near the ringside.

In the ring, a couple of fancy tap-dancers was making motions at each other, and the crowd was rumbling. The crowd that frequented the Quiet Hour didn't give a dern about classy science; what they wanted was gore by the gallon. If at least one of the fighters didn't leave the ring on a shutter and the other'n didn't have to be carried by his seconds, they figgered the fight was framed, and started in to wreck the joint.

They was some reason for their irritation in that case. I knowed both the eggs waltzing through the main event - a couple of clever, shifty boxers which wasn't fond of getting



their gore spilt. Spagoni hadst been foolish enough to pay 'em in advance, and they wasn't putting no enthusiasm in their gestures. The crowd was beginning to growl and move about restless.

Immediately I got into the ringside, where I stood up, obstructing people's view and adding to their irritation, I began to holler, "What kind of a cakewalk is this? Make 'em fight or throw 'em out! Oh, what a couple of bums!"

All a dissatisfied crowd needs is a leader with a strong voice. Instantly the fans began to holler and yell and cuss, and the alleged fighters quit shaking their fists at each other, and looked around to see who started the rumpus. I am a man which stands out in any crowd, and they quickly spotted me.

"What are you tryin' to do, start somethin'?" one of 'em demanded.

"I starts nothin' I can't finish!" I bellered, promptly climbing through the ropes. They started toward me, but just then the crowd begun to throw things. A barrage of rotten eggs, defunct cabbages and dead cats filled the air, and the tap-dancers and the referee run for cover, pursued by the missiles and expurgations of the maddened fans.

I waded through the carpet of rotten vegetables, ducked some more, and, standing up in the middle of the ring, demanded attention in a voice which has been used in past times for a fog-horn.

The crowd, being in a mean mood, tried to howl me down, but quickly realizing the futility of pitting their feeble vocal cords against mine, and having throwed away all their ammunition, they quieted down and lemme have my say.

"You all have just seen a travesty on the art of boxin'," I bellered. "Are you satisfied?"

"NO!" they roared.

"Then set still, you tinhorn, four-flushin' gutter-rats," I roared, "and I'll give you a chanct to see some action. I got fifty bucks which says I can lick any man in the house, here in this ring, right now!"

There was silence for a second; maybe they was men there which thought they couldst lick me - the ignorance of

the average man is surprizing - but very few had no fifty dollars to bet. Then up riz a gigantic figger which I rek-ernized as Swordfish Connolly, the toughest A. B. that ever shipped aboard of a blackbirder.

"I got fifty that says you're a liar!" he bellered, waving a handful of greenbacks.

"Put up and climb in!" I roared, beginning to peel my duds. I always wears my ring-togs under my regular clothes when in port, partly so as to be always ready to go into the ring at a second's notice, partly because anything you ain't wearing on you in them ports is likely to be stole.

"Put up yourself," he snarled. "I'm goin' to the dress-in' room and get my togs on; when I get back, we puts up our dough with Spagoni."

The crowd was whooping joyously by this time, knowing us both by repertation. Connolly swaggered off to the kennels which serves for dressing rooms, and I called Spagoni over to me. He was rubbing his hands with glee because it was going to be a break for him - a show the fans wouldst go into hysterics over, and wouldn't cost him nothing.

So I got him in a corner and I said, "Spagoni, I am do-in' you a big favor fightin' Connolly in your arener for nothin'. Now, Spagoni, when Swordfish comes back here and gives you the fifty to hold, you tell I done put up my fifty."

"But you ain't!" he protested. "You wanta I shoulda lie?"

"Spagoni," I said, putting my arm around his shoulders and smiling gently in his face so his hair stood right straight up, "I loves you like a brother. You and me is always been pals. I wouldn't ask you to do nothin' dishonest, and you know it. So when Connolly comes back, you just tell him you got my fifty, unless you want to spend the rest of your life in a wheel-chair."

"If you win that's alright," he sputtered, shuddering slightly. "But suppossa you lose?"

"Me lose?" I snorted. "Are you plumb outa your head? Anyway, Connolly couldn't do nothin' but bust you on the nose, and he couldn't bust you half as hard as I'll bust you, if you don't do like I says."

So here come Connolly striding through the crowd,

accompanied by three or four thugs from his ship. He clumb into the ring and shoved a bunch of bills into Spagoni's hands.

"There's my half," he grunted. "Put up your dough, Dorgan."

"Oh, Spagoni's already got all he's goin' to get from me," I assured him. "Ain'tcha, Spaggi, old pal?" I asked, gently wagging my enormous fist under his pale schnozzle.

"Oh, sure," he agreed. "Posicertainly!"

"Well, le's get started!" rumbled Connolly, turning to his corner.

I set in my corner, attended by a half-caste of some sort as second, and Spagoni raised his hands for silence. He got it, also a empty whiskey bottle on the side of the head.

He staggered slightly, smiled gently, and began, "Gentlemen and ladeez, excuse, no ladeez here. In thisa corner, Swordfish Connolly, of the Venturer, 195 pounds; in thisa corner, Sailor Dorgan, of the Sea-Girl, 190 pounds; you alla know - "

"Yeah, we know 'em!" rose a maddened yell. "Set down and let things start, before we lynches you, you \*&ç#@\*!"

Spagoni ducked, the bell whanged, and the slaughter begun.

Me and Swordfish was of the same mind. We rushed from our corners, each intent on wiping the other'n clean out of existence with the first punch. As a result, and from over eagerness, we both missed and sprawled on the canvas, to the hilarious delight of the crowd.

We rose, our tempers not improved by the accident, and Connolly tried to improve the shining hour by catching me on the chin with a right hook that made me look right down my own spine. I retaliated with a left hook that sunk my mitt to the wrist in his midriff, and he turned a remarkable green. I might of finished him there, but I stopped to ask him sarcastically if he was sea-sick, which maddened him so that he banged me square in the mouth so hard it wedged my upper lip between my two front teeth.

Irritated by this mischance, I waded into him with both fists pumping, and he met me, nothing loath. We traded

blows in the center of the ring till the ring seemed to be swimming in a red fog, and it rocked and rolled under our feet like a ship's deck in a squall. Neither of us heard the gong, and our seconds had to pull us apart; during the process one of Connolly's handlers give me a vi'lent kick in the belly, and I replied with a sock under the chin which knocked him through the ropes and under the first row seats, where he slumbered peacefully throughout the remaining of the fight.

My second doused me with water, but I told him irritably to try to work loose the bit of skin of my lip which was jammed between my teeth; he couldn't do it, and just as the gong sounded, in response to my urgent request, he whipped out his knife and cut it loose. I was instantly flooded with blood, but I felt a lot better as I come out for the second round.

The crowd, however, seeing the blood gushing outa my mouth and down my chin, set up a yell of excitement, thinking I'd ruptured a vein or something, and Connolly, not knowing the reason, supposed me to be in a worse fix than I was, rushed in wild for the kill, and careless.

I caught him coming in with a left hook to the jaw that turned him a full somersault, to the hysterical joy of the crowd. If he hadn't been made outa solid iron, it would of broke his neck. As it was, he took the count of nine, and riz glassy-eyed. I come in fast, but he backed away, groggy, and crouching and covering up. I follered him around the ring, trying to work him into a opening, and hammering away at his arms and the top of his head, which was all I could see.

At last, in a rage, I crashed an overhand right to the back of his neck, which stretched him out flat on his face. I turned to go back to my corner, sure the go was over, when splash! one of his seconds dumped a water bucket full of ice water over him, and Connolly come to life with a frenzied yell. He come up wild-eyed and howling, and evidently blaming me for the ice water, he rushed wildly at me - I set myself to crash him - my foot slipped on the wet canvas - my left hook swished over his head, and he torpedoed me with an awful right to the solar plexus. As I went down I swung a wild overhand right to his jaw, and

the round ended with both of us on the canvas.

Our seconds dragged us to our corners, and worked over us, so we was able to come out for the third. I saw his seconds jerk Connolly's glove off and work over his hand, but I was too sick at my stummick to say anything to the referee. And at the Quiet Hour, the referee don't bother hisself much with what goes on between rounds - or during rounds, either, for that matter. They're plumb broad-minded about such things as fouls and the like.

I felt better as I come out for the third. I went in ready to start in slugging again, but Connolly wasn't none too eager.

He backed away, fiddling with his left, and keeping his right cocked, and the crowd yelled for me to go in and finish him. I done so, not because I cared what they was yelling but because I am too impatient to fool around in a fight.

I plunged, missed a left hook as he ducked, started my right over - bang! I was on my back in the middle of the ring, feeling like my skull was busted, and the crowd was going crazy. The referee was counting over me, and Connolly was leaning on the ropes, grinning wickedly down at me. I knowed! He had about a pound of lead in his right glove! I could tell by the feel of it.

This enraged me so I ariz with the intention of taking my enemy apart, piece by piece, but hardly had I arose when I encountered that blame lead-loaded glove again, and down I went. This time I took a count of nine, and riz more warily.

Connolly's best hand by far was his right. So I went for him, circling to the left, and paying no attention to his left. I was watching the right, and I laughed with innercent glee to make a discovery. He had so blame much lead in his glove, he couldn't shoot his punches. He had to swing his right like a club - heavy and slow.

Seeing this, I laughed a fiendish laugh, and went in to take him plumb apart. He battered me with his left, starting the claret in streams, but I paid no heed. I watched his right. I ripped both hands to his guts, his right come over, I ducked - he missed by a yard. He couldn't land. He sweated and grunted and puffed, and swung and missed

- and meanwhile I was ripping with both hands at his mid-section. At last, bloody and half-blinded, Swordfish let go again with the right, in sheer desperation. He launched it about like a man putting a sixteen-pound shot, and there was weight and force enough in the blow to have felled an ox. But I stepped inside of it and my left, starting from my hip, crashed splinteringly against the Connolly jaw. I didn't wait to see him counted out. In fact there wasn't a count. The referee nudged the fallen warrior with his toe, beckoned to his handlers and turned away with a yawn. He'd had a busy day.

The clamor of the throng was still ringing in the welkin when I grabbed Connolly's fifty outa Spagoni's unwilling fingers, snatched on my street clothes and rushed out of the arena. People scurried out of my way, thinking me either drunk or crazy, but I give no heed.

An awful fear seized me that Miss Chisom had tired of waiting and had gone away, taking her ten thousand dollar monkey with her. But she was still sitting in the back room of the American Bar. I got a vague impression that there was a lot of empty glasses and bottles on the table, but at the moment the impression was meaningless to me. Both my eyes was black, my face was bruised and skinned, and I hadn't washed off the dried blood.

"Heavens above!" gasped Miss Chisom. "What happened?"

"Here's the dough," I panted. "Gimme the monk!"

She placed it in my hands, and I grasped it firmly but reverently, feeling like I was holding ten thousand dollars.

"Gimme your address," I continued. "I'm leavin' for Canton tonight, if I have to stowaway on a freighter. And I want to split the money with you that I get from Tang Wu."

"I'll send you my address," she said. "Now I must go - and thank you!"

And she left in a hurry which surprized me. A whisk of skirts, the slam of an outer door, and she was gone, leaving me gaping after her. Then I sat down to get my breath, and inspect the monkey, and as I did so, the bartender come in.

"Say, Dorgan," said he, "that dame which just beat it out of here said you'd settle for all the drinks she's had

since you left before. By golly, she had a thirst like a fish!"

"Huh?" I said in some surprize. "Well, say, Joe, you been to Canton; do you know a mandarin by the name of Tang Wu?"

"Tang Wu?" he said. "Why, hell, he's been dead for ten years!"

"What?" my sudden roar of incredulity was cut short as my eyes fell on a bit of paper glued on the under part of the monkey. I gasped as I read what was on it - read it again and found voice in a yell that lifted the barkeep's hair.

That poignant howl was echoed from without, and Jim Rogers rushed wildly in. At the sight of the monkey he shrieked accusingly.

"You got it!" he squalled. "I knew you'd double-cross me! You said you'd gimme half of what you got! I demands my share! I'll call a cop - "

"If I give you half of what I've got tonight," I grunted, "you wouldn't no ways survive it; but here's about one-tenth of one percent!"

And I give it to him free and generous - smack on the button. I laid the jade monkey of the Yih Hee Yih on his bosom, and strode out, brooding. The bartender crawled from under the table and awedly read what was stamped on the bit of paper pasted on the monkey's stern: "Made in Bridgeport, Connecticut - 15¢."

## SINGING IN THE WIND

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Singing joy, singing joy,  
Singing joy and sorrow -  
Hope and hate and honor cloy  
Riding down tomorrow.

Singing joy and sorrow,  
Sun or wind or thunder,  
Riding down tomorrow  
Till the sun goes under.

Through the skies where gulls lair  
Farther than men reckon -  
Riding down tomorrow where  
The sunsets beckon.

Men make their muddled rules,  
Song and law and story -  
Ride with all the splendid fools  
Laughing up to glory.

Laughing at the galley,  
Mocking at the mill;  
Singing up the valley  
When the dawn lies still.

Priestly hope and horror,  
Leave it all to him -  
Where is your tomorrow  
When the eyes grow dim?



Future hope or sorrow,  
Taken at his trust -  
But where is your tomorrow  
When the heart turns dust.

Debts to life are paid in  
Song and curse and blow -  
All dim tomorrows fade in  
The sunset's glow.

Riding down the ages,  
Riding up the wind,  
Turn the yellowed pages,  
Bones of men who sinned.

Soulless, ghostly, vague, apart  
From all joy and sorrow -  
Will you leave tomorrow's heart  
For a priest's tomorrow?

Sing or curse or borrow,  
All that men have sinned;  
Riding down tomorrow,  
Laughing down the wind.

**LETTER:** DR. I. M. HOWARD to  
E. HOFFMANN PRICE,  
dated June 21, 1944.

Dear Mr. Price:

Just received the copy of *Diablerie*. You do not know how real your picture of Robert's personality was portrayed. So real it was that I could almost feel as if Robert stood before me again, alive, laughing, talking as when he was here with me; that I could feel again the warmth of his living person, could see him smile and hear his soft voice in all its penetrating clearness, even the tone of it wholly unimpaired. The wonder of it how one with only two visits could gather so perfectly his personality. Having lived right with Robert in such close association with him from his babyhood to the end of his life, I could not have portrayed the man as you did with only a passing hand touch with him. Robert had many acquaintances, but only two boys in Cross Plains were close to him. Indeed, Robert was a lonely man because the people around him understood little of his life and the character of the man. His writing little appealed to those around. The newstands carried the magazines which carried his stories for a time, but quit altogether handling *Weird Tales* and other magazines carrying Robert's stories. Robert is dead to the people of Cross Plains; he is, I dare say, a forgotten memory. Such is the mental calibre of the people of those among whom he lived. But why say such things. It may be in a way they do remember Robert.

But to most people he was just a story writer. It is just plain grief to me now that he spent his life in such surroundings. But he seemed happy there with his mother and me, and I guess he was. Had he felt the urge to go, I guess he would have taken off. But his devotion to his mother and me was such that I don't believe he ever felt the urge to go and leave us. Especially his mother, around whose knees he stayed so close in baby and childhood. And his mother's devotion was equally as strong for him. She was the brav-

est woman I've ever seen. During the months and years of intense suffering, no word of complaint was ever heard.

She loved poetry. Written poetry by sheets and reams, almost books of it, were stored in her memory so that from Robert's babyhood he had heard its recital day by day. She was a lover of the beautiful. As Robert grew, he saw the beautiful around the old country of stunted post-oaks. His agile imagination transformed that drab old country into beautiful landscapes. He saw beautiful skylines along the low squat hills down in Brown County. Two peaks two miles apart to the northwest of Cross Plains were ever thrilling interest to him. He often gazed at them from our home and talked about them to me. The legendary tales he heard from the old natives of Indians and range fights between the settlers and Indians on moonlight nights not so many years ago when the country was new and sparsely settled. His imagination wove fantastic pictures of that drab section of the postoaks where he lived, yet he was very realistic. Nothing of the least moment in the everyday life escaped him. The neighborhood news and happenings of the narrow sphere in which he lived was of interest to him, just like it was to the slow plodding folks around Cross Plains. Robert read the newspapers. He was keenly interested in the pageant of both nation and state in which he lived. At election time I've known him to sit by his radio far into the night listening to election returns. He was a great lover of the ring and football. Have known him to start hitchhiking to Ft. Worth or Brownwood to see a fight before he owned a car of his own.

And when he was just a slender youth, Robert was always hearty and cheerful in his home, never saw him morose, crabbed, or cross in all his life. He was really a conversationalist. He loved to talk in his home to me and his mother, and often in our rides I had but to suggest some historical theme, and he looked it up and talked interestingly and revealed a wide knowledge of history of which I had had only a smattering. And on and on until he seemed to exhaust every bit of everything about that particular bit of history. Robert had a wonderful memory as well as a vivid imagination.

Robert loved animals of all kind. You could not by any

amount of persuasion have induced him to shoot a bird or a jackrabbit or any kind of animal. He had a dog, a mixed breed, half-collie, half-Walker foxhound. His association was so close with this dog until the dog seemed to develop a perfectly human understanding of not only Robert, but Robert's mother and myself. Also, when the dog was 12 years old, he sickened to die. Robert knew his dog was going to die. He packed his grip, opened the gate, walked out, and said, "Mama, I am going." He went to Brownwood and stayed until his dog died, which was two or three days. But each morning he phoned and asked his mother if Patch (that was the dog's name) was still alive; finally on the third or fourth morning, his mother told him she thought the Patch dog would not last longer than 12 o'clock. He always spoke thus: "Mama, how are you?" When his mother would reply, he would say: "How is Patch?" After the fourth day when his mother told him the dog was going, he never inquired any more; he knew the dog would soon die. Therefore he never spoke of him again. I had the dog buried in a deep grave in the back lot, then had the lot plowed deeply and then had them take a big harrow and harrow it deeply all over to destroy every trace of the grave, so sensitive was he to the loss of the dog. And only once did he ever allude to the death of his dog again. He said to his mother one day: "Mother, did you bury Patch under the mesquite tree in the corner of the lot on the east side?" She said yes, and the matter was never mentioned by any of us again.

He was so sensitive to things of a depressing nature that his mother and I never mentioned anything of a depressing nature in his presence. It had been thus with him since childhood. His dog died when he (the dog) was 12 and Robert 24. He raised the dog from the time it was a wee thing, before his eyes were barely open, through the life of the dog. The dog was an inseparable companion to Robert. It was often fed from the table as Robert ate, sitting down by Robert's chair. When Robert helped himself, before eating a bite, he helped Patch to food.

Also, when an old starved horse or dog came around home, he fed them. At the time of his death, there were 13 cats who had gathered up around the house. They were

strays. I had spoken to him about gathering them up and carrying them away myself. He discouraged this, and continued milking his goats and feeding the cats. Such was his kindness toward dumb animals, yet I feel sure had anyone crossed him in an encounter, he would have had tough going. After a long series of bag punching, bar lifting, spring exercises of his hands, and general muscle training, I asked him one day: "Robert, what's this all about?" He replied: "Dad, when I was in school, I had to take a lot because I was alone and no one to take my part. I entered in to build my body until when a scoundrel crosses me up, I can with my bare hands tear him to pieces, double him up, and break his back with my hands alone."

Well, I could go on and say many things about him. But few would be interested. But to his mother and me his affection was touching and beautiful; to his friends, his attitude was generous, warm, and unselfish. To one whom he felt had wronged him it was an unforgiveableness for all time, and unforgettable hatred. And these were among the kids of his school days. When only a child he never forgot or forgave their unkindness when he had no one to take his part. I never knew him to give offense to anyone by word or action. He was most courteous to everyone he met. I never knew him to fail to lift his hat to any woman on the streets, good or bad, in his village home among the folks he knew. Well, the water that's passed under the bridge will return no more. Since the day they left me, life has been loneliness indescribable.....

I am by no means settled here. I am investigating an old people's home (state) with a view of trying to enter it. Which, if I do, perhaps you will hear no more of me. I am now well into my 74th year, my eyes are getting dimmer each day (cataracts in both eyes). I have the incurable malady of diabetes, have to take insulin every day. I am the last of my father's family, not one left. And, as you know, none remains of my own family. I have a few nieces and nephews scattered over the state. None of them would care to be responsible for me. Therefore, I am looking for a place to turn in what little I have left and, if possible, content myself to await the inevitable.....

# ACHERON - A REVISIONARY THEORY

BY ROBERT YAPLE

About 15,500 B.C., Stygians from Khemi established an outpost at the mouth of the Tybor.<sup>1</sup> It expanded generally up-river in the age that followed, enslaving or destroying all the small unclassified tribes which stood in its way, and spread out over most of that area later occupied by the Hyborian kingdoms of Argos, Aquilonia, and Nemedra.<sup>2</sup> Quite early it cast off all Stygian control and became a separate kingdom - Acheron - though it remained basically Stygian in culture. Some 500 years later the Acherontian frontier, still advancing, first encountered the wandering Hyborians.<sup>3</sup> Earlier Hyborian drifts had driven the Picts west, into the wilderness, and then swung south along the Shirki.<sup>4</sup> In turn, they were expelled by the Acherontians but allowed to exist west of the river along with the debris of other races - as a useful reserve from which slaves and sacrifices were regularly harvested.<sup>5</sup> Some, Hyborians and others, percolated into the Zingg valley, mixed with the Shemite-Pictish race there, and began to organize that cluster of villages which eventually grew into the kingdom of Zingara.<sup>6</sup> In the north a purer drift was driven into mountain enclaves, where these ancestors of the Gundermen, surrounded by enemies, inbred for 2000 years.

In the northeast, east, and southeast, the Hybori were more fortunate because the situation was more complex. Stygia had become overlord of most of the Shemite plain and the uplands just beyond, not actually colonizing and consolidating the area, but merely occupying it from scattered fortresses. Nevertheless, the effect was that Stygia's frontier marched with Acheron's for 1500 miles,<sup>7</sup> rather to the uneasiness of both. At the same time, there had arisen the kingdom of Zamora about 500 miles east of Acheron. Its people (remnants of the pre-cataclysmic

Zhemri re-invigorated by infusions of some unclassified race <sup>8)</sup> and their spider-god were only somewhat less menacing and mysterious than Acheron and Stygia, followers of Set. Internecine war among the three kingdoms must have been inevitable, except for the arrival of the Hyborians. Unable to penetrate either the Acherontian or the Zamorian frontier, they eddied southward and, with Zamora's secret aid and Acheron's connivance, fell irresistably upon Stygia's chain of northern forts. In the end, Stygia lost all her claims in the uplands but continued to terrorize the greater part of Shem for another 2000 years.

The Hyborians were allowed to keep what they had won, to settle in tribal clusters between Acheron and Zamora, were quickly accepted as foederati. The earliest - Koth and Ophir - were soon genuine if primitive monarchies; slightly later drifts, because they were continually overrun by new waves from the north, never achieved anything more sophisticated than confederacies of city-states. <sup>10</sup> Ophir was entirely under Acheron's influence, but Koth was in a more complex position: its western reaches subject to Acheron, <sup>11</sup> its eastern to Zamora. The Corinthians were also tributary to both east and west, but rather more under Zamorian influence - like the Brythuni, who wandered in a bit later. <sup>12</sup> Acheron's frontier was therefore more or less stabilized. Expansion halted, but there was still considerable activity: slave-raiding across the Shirki and into Shem, <sup>13</sup> border skirmishes with the Stygians, <sup>14</sup> and bitter war in the north against the unconquerable Cimmerians. <sup>15</sup>

In the centuries that followed, the Hyborians gained a great deal of experience in organized warfare - being rather braver, considerably more intelligent, and infinitely more trustworthy than the Shemite auxiliaries also used by Acheron. But, in the long run, the Hyborians profited more than their employers. Experience and advanced equipment (iron swords, armor, the stirrup) led to increasing sophistication in tactics. At the same time Acheron was becoming a land of jealous and turbulent wizards, obsessed with their own arcane evils, their armies filled with larger and larger numbers of foreigners. Finally about 13,000 B.C. Khossus V of Koth, <sup>16</sup> probably taking

advantage of internal disturbance in Acheron, formed a grand alliance with the Corinthi, Brythuni, Ophir, several newer Hyborian tribes, western Shemites and even Zingarans.<sup>17</sup> A massive attack from east and south, mutiny of the mercenaries, a short but savage war, and Acheron was destroyed.<sup>18</sup> All its people were put to the sword (except a few who escaped into the hills<sup>19</sup> or to Stygia), and Python, its evil capital was utterly obliterated. Stygia finally entered the conflict, too late and on the wrong side. Furious, the Kothians swung round, over-ran all of Shem, stormed the great Stygian city of Kuthchemes,<sup>20</sup> and drove the Stygians back beyond the Styx.<sup>21</sup> In becoming overlord of Shem, however, Koth was preoccupied in the south while other Hyborians were partitioning what had been Acheron. Brythunia, Corinthia, and Ophir made rather large territorial gains initially but failed to hold very much against the ambitions of newer, purer tribes. The Aquiloni, allied with Gundermen from the northern hills and Bossonians from the trans-Shirki marches, staked out an enormous claim. Another new tribe, almost as fierce, founded Nemedi. Zingara also enlarged her borders somewhat but was largely forestalled in the north by Aquilonia and in the east by Argos.<sup>22</sup>

And so began the great age of the Hyborians, a feudal age in which political integration was slow, wars frequent, life violent, and often vicious - but a glorious age still which was to reach its peak 3000 years later: in Conan's time.



## FOOTNOTES

1. For an explanation of the dating, see note 18 below.
2. Robert E. Howard and L. Sprague de Camp, *CONAN THE CONQUEROR* (New York: Lancer Books, 1967), p. 19.
3. Robert E. Howard, L. Sprague de Camp, and Lin Carter, *CONAN* (New York, Lancer Books, 1967), p. 29.
4. This seems to be the only interpretation which fits the known facts: the Picts inhabited the area south of Cimmeria about 16,500 B. C. (*CONAN*, p. 25); the Hyborians drove the Picts out into the west subsequently (*Ibid.*, p. 29); Acheron bordered Cimmeria during an apparently later period (*CONQUEROR*, p. 22).
5. Acherontian "kings returned from the west with their spoils and naked captives" periodically (*Ibid.*, p. 20). It is also clear from the context that these captives were Hyborian. It may be, of course, that after a raid on the eastern Hybori, the Acherontians usually took the longer but easier route back to Python: down the Styx to the sea and thence up the Tybor and its tributaries. Or it may be that "west" is a textual error prompted by the old but mistaken notion that Acheron originated in the east and conquered its way westward rather than the other way round. My theory seems the most plausible, however, if one accepts the existence of the Bossonians at so early a date.
6. *CONAN*, pp. 28-30.
7. *CONQUEROR*, p. 161. The distance is my own estimate.
8. *CONAN*, pp. 27, 29. Probably drifted out of the east

and possibly related to the migration that founded Stygia. The old idea that there was a "northern branch" to this migration (Ibid., p. 29) is therefore still plausible, but the future of this branch was almost surely in Zamora, not Acheron.

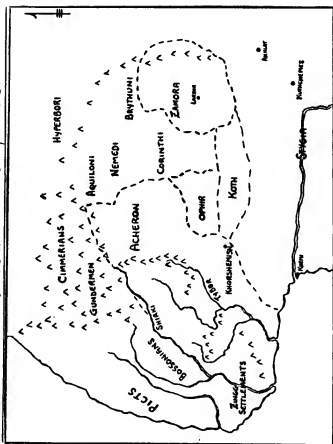
9. Established about 3000 years after the Great Cataclysm - or 15,000 B.C. (Ibid., p. 180).
10. Corinthia (Ibid., p. 131) and Brythunia (Robert E. Howard, Bjorn Nyberg, and L. Sprague de Camp, CONAN THE AVENGER, New York: Lancer Books, 1968, p. 88). Zamorian intrigues may also have hindered unification.
11. CONQUEROR, p. 19. Perhaps the traditional Kothic policy of treachery and dissimulation grew out of this circumstance.
12. Linguistic evidence, admittedly fragmentary, suggests that the later Corinthic and Brythunic tongues were essentially Hyborian roots adapted to Zamorian inflections. Acherontian as well as Shemitish influence on the Kothic language also seems evident, especially in the high frequency of fricatives.
13. And probably into Brythunia as well.
14. CONQUEROR, p. 20, mentions "spoils" from the west as well as captives. "Spoils" could, I think, only have been taken at the expense of the Stygians.
15. Ibid., p. 22.
16. The extant biographical information fits the theory perfectly. See Robert E. Howard and L. Sprague de Camp, CONAN THE USURPER (New York: Lancer Books, 1967), p. 233.
17. The "feathered shaman" mentioned in CONQUEROR, p. 18, was possibly a Pict but more probably a Zing-

aran.

18. It is clear Acheron fell c. 13,000 B.C. - 3000 years before Conan's reign (CONQUEROR, pp. 17, 19). For the other key dates in this essay, I have borrowed the formula from the older theory (CONAN, pp. 28-29), i. e., that Acheron existed for 500 years before encountering the Hybori, and that it co-existed with them for another 2000 years. Counting backwards, this puts the founding of Acheron at about 15,500 B.C. - or some 500 years later than has previously been thought. The notion that Acheron and Stygia were founded "simultaneously" is clearly wrong.
19. Ibid., pp. 19, 191.
20. Robert E. Howard and L. Sprague de Camp, CONAN THE FREEBOOTER (New York: Lancer Books, 1968), p. 57.
21. CONAN, p. 30.
22. The latter carved out probably by a tribe previously subject to Koth.



ACHERON AT ITS HEIGHT — c. 13,000 B.C.



## A DREAM

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

I remember a most curious dream I had when a child - a dream that I have remembered long after I have forgotten the tang of stolen fruit and the feel of the morning dew on my bare feet. I dreamed that I slept and awoke, and when I awoke a boy and a girl about my age were playing near me. They were small and trimly shaped, with very dark skin and dark eyes. Their garments were scanty and strange to me, now that I remember them; but at the time they were not strange, for I too was clad like them, and I too was small and delicately fashioned and dark. I had been sleeping on a sort of couch, richly made, which stood on a wide porch or room - I am not sure now. But if it were a room it had many wide windows without panes, and it seems that there were large columns. The room or porch looked out over a green and beautiful landscape of trees and grass-grown hills sloping to a wide bay, glittering blue in the sunlight. Now, as I woke in my dream, this scene was fully familiar to me, and I knew that the boy and the girl were my brother and sister. It was not as if I had merely wakened from a sleep, returning to my natural, work-a-day world. And suddenly in my dream I began to laugh and to narrate to my brother and sister the strange dream I had had. For I told them of what - if there is any truth at all in reality - constituted my actual waking life, but could not put it clearly because it seemed dim and vague; as a dream seems dim and vague when one awakes. I told them that my dream had seemed so vivid while dreaming it, that I had actually thought it to be real, and believed myself to be a stocky blond child living a waking life, without knowledge of any other. And I said that I was glad I had awakened because that dream-life had not been a good one, but full of strange barbarisms and roughness. Then they laughed and I awoke in reality - or slept again;

I have occasionally wondered which. On which side of the gulf of dreams do we walk, and do we sleep when we think we wake?

## NO MORE THE SERPENT PROW

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

The House of Asgaard passes with the night;  
The House of Vanaheim in clouds and mist;  
The House of Gael is fading like the sight  
Of eyes that cold Nylyara's lips have kissed.

The dragon-ships are rotting on the shore;  
Forgot the shouts that shook the foaming deep;  
And like a slow, foul tide wave, ever more,  
Out of the East the drooling mist waves creep.

## MOTHER AND SON

BY L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

Ah, Conan! Ah, Conan! How long will ye wander  
before ye settle down here?  
'Twas ages ago that ye should have been wived  
and given me grandchilder dear!  
Your father would never have left me alone  
in the village for year after year.

Oh, Mother! Oh, Mother! You've never been south,  
and I see that you don't understand.  
There's many a glittering city I haven't  
yet seen, and there's many a land.  
Come journey with me, and I'll make you a duchess  
or something that's equally grand!

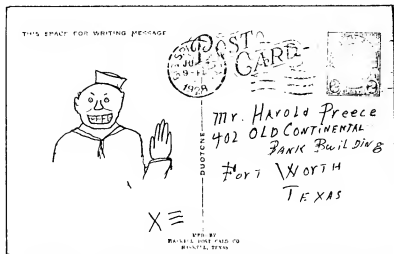
I'm mickle too old to be gadding away  
to your sinful cities so fair,  
And all that I want is to see my bairn  
a Cimmerian village mayor,  
With a bountiful field, and a hundred kine,  
and a scion to be his heir.

Oh, Mother, you know that I cannot endure  
your monotonous rustic round.  
I'm off to the South, where there's women and wine,  
and jewels and gold to be found,  
And battles to fight, and dragons to slay,  
and where I might even be crowned!

Ah, Crom take your jewels and dragons and crowns,  
and Crom take your warrior's pride!  
I see it is destined that ye shall go forth,  
and fated that I shall abide;  
But to your Cimmerian home once again,  
come ye back before I shall have died!

--31 March 1969

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Post card. Robert E. Howard to Harold Preece



## A PLEDGE

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Or ever they spiked good beer with rum,  
Or poured their brandy there,  
I was a Limehouse gutter-bum,  
And you were a barmaid fair.

Never a shilling in my purse  
To meet mine host's demands,  
But many a mug of ale I quaffed,  
Drawn with your own fair hands.

Paradise was a place to me  
Where I'd drink free ale from a tub,  
But I found a Paradise on earth  
In that little Wapping pub,

Where, when the boss was doing time,  
And you tended bar alone,  
And out in the fog the fishwife's howl  
Vied with the cabman's moan,

You fed me on rolls and hot roast beef  
Till I was ready to burst,  
And poured out gallons of foaming ale  
To quench my horrible thirst.

And that was a hundred years ago,  
In a land across the sea,  
But now, with drink that would sicken a dog  
In this country of the free,

With reeling gait and glassy stare,  
And a wildly waving stein,  
I pledge your ancient charity -  
In the name of Saint Valentine.

## AGE

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

Age sat on his high throne  
And scoffed to see me ride,  
But I was on the beaches  
And racing with the tide.

Age sat on his golden throne  
And named me as a fool,  
But I was splashing maidens  
Nude in a forest pool.

Age sat in his corner  
And mocked my furious zest,  
But I was breaking sun spears  
On my hairy chest.

Age stole from his neighbor  
Great stores of gems and gold.  
Age called me from my games  
To fight for his treasure hold.

Age cowered in his castle  
And preached great deeds and high,  
But I was laughing, laughing,  
As I went forth to die.

## REVIEW

CONAN THE FREEBOOTER, by Robert E. Howard and L. Sprague de Camp, Lancer Books, 223 pages, 95 cents.

The five novelettes collected in this third volume in Lancer's complete Conan series cover Conan's adventures as a free-lance adventurer, a mercenary in the army of the small border kingdom of Khoraja, a pirate on the Vilayet Sea, and (again) a mercenary in the service of Queen Taramis of Khauran. Three are original Howard stories (of the early Conan period 1933-34), the remaining two a couple of the reworked Howard-de Camp oriental adventure yarns that appeared in TALES OF CONAN in 1955.

It's a mixed bag. "Hawks Over Shem," leading off the book, is a fast-paced, unremarkable swashbuckler in which Conan becomes enmeshed in conspiracy and political intrigue while tracking down an old enemy in the Shemitish city of Asgalun. There are a number of sword-fights, a lot of double-crossing, some off-the-wall sorcery and a de Campish ending in which the mad king Akhirom, thinking he can fly, plunges off a tower - "Here I go!" - and squashes on the ground "with the sound of a melon hit by a sledge hammer." The love interest is sketchy and the character of Conan less concrete than in some of the other Howard-de Camp collaborations.

"Black Colossus" is one of REH's best Conan entries and a tight, suspenseful, creepy adventure. A resurrected Stygian sorcerer (prototype for Xaltotun of Acheron in "Hour of the Dragon" two years later) leads an army of desert nomads against a small Hyborian border kingdom and Conan is drafted to stop the invasion. Howard's moods shift easily from high humor (Conan's first encounter with the young queen, his disclosure to the nobles of Khoraja as their new general as he is engaged in gnawing a side of beef) to gloomy horror (the showdown with Nattohk in the dark tomb). The battle scenes, as with most Howard battle scenes, are gripping and colorful; though the conclus-

ion, in which the Cimmerian dispatches his wizard-foe by merely throwing his sword at him, is something of a let-down. (Recalling Fritz Leiber's criticism that "in many of the stories ... Conan is too obviously the winner from the start.")

Conan's career as a pirate harrying King Yildiz's Turanian navy on the Sea of Vilayet (whence the present volume derives its name) provides the background for "Shadows in the Moonlight" and "The Road of the Eagles." In the first story, Conan slays a Turanian noble as revenge for the noble's massacring an outlaw band Conan had rode with, absconds to a deserted island with a stolen row-boat and a homeless girl, and comes up against buccaneers, a great ape, and assorted demons.

As Avram Davidson said of it in a review in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, the story "has got just about the whole works." But not enough to raise it above the run-of-the-mill Conan formula. High points: the duel on the beach (reminiscent of a similar scene in Sabatini's *CAPTAIN BLOOD*), and Conan's fight with the man-ape, somewhat more grueling and realistic than like episodes in the Burroughs Tarzan books.

The Howard-de Camp hybrid "The Road of the Eagles" is a more successful venture. The plot is more complicated, more attention is paid to the rugged beauty of the Colchian Mountains, and Conan functions as a tougher, more resourceful leader. There is no gratuitous love interest - the one girl in the story, Roxana, is a Mata-Hari type who devotes her energy to springing the Turanian crown prince Teyaspa from the bandit stronghold where he has been imprisoned by his brother Yildiz, and commits suicide rather than fall into the hands of Conan's corsairs. Conan's rationalization of his desertion by his comrades at the conclusion is humorous and consistent with his character.

"A Witch Shall Be Born," rounding out the book, contains perhaps the most famous episode from the Conan series: Conan, nailed to a cross, biting a vulture's neck in two when the bird swoops at him. Again, sorcery threatens a small border kingdom - this time the evil witch Salome, sister to Queen Taramis of Khauran - with a band of

prey-for-pay mercenaries on hand to back up the magic with cold steel.

Howard's plotting is sharp and sure, the villains Salome and Constantius properly depraved and slimy, the plight of the captive queen poignantly presented. As in "Black Colossus," the fantasy elements are splendidly eerie: the monster Thaug - the witch's refusing to die even after a sword-thrust has split her heart - Salome's proud boast early in the story: "It will always be Salome, the witch, even when the mountains of ice have roared down from the pole and ground the civilizations to ruin, and a new world has risen from the ashes and dust - even then there shall be Salomes to walk the earth, to trap men's hearts by their sorcery, to dance before the kings of the world, and see the heads of the wise men fall at their pleasure."

And Howard's reiteration of that difference which sunders Conan from the society of civilized men: "But not all men seek rest and peace; some are born with the spirit of the storm in their blood, restless harbingers of violence and bloodshed, knowing no other path..."

The cover is not by Frazetta or Krenkel, and suffers thereby. De Camp's introduction reprints Dr. John D. Clark's enjoyable foreword from the old Gnome edition of CONAN THE CONQUEROR.

--Fred Blosser

All fled — all done, so lift me on the pyre;  
The Feast is over and the lamps expire.



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